

Education Governance Responses
Fair Haven Meeting (2/7/07) – Fair Haven Union High School

16 Attendees (facilitated by George Appenzeller)

Question #1: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the present education governance system in your community?:

Advantages

Local control for local schools
More accountability
Easier for school board members to match up with interests/abilities
Elementary school governance personnel known to and accessible to citizenry
Independent community identity
Variety of creative education ideas
Focus on community values
Access to board members
Greater diversity and participation (greater diversity of participants)
Immediacy of response
Division of labor

Disadvantages

Central office money not voted on
Difficult to get people to serve on boards
Reinventing the wheel
Confusing, complicated, communication difficult
Micro-managing by boards
High school governance more remote
Hard to find common interests when isolated
Children not comparably prepared for high school
Hard to get diverse district priorities to align for common policies
Hard to coordinate joint activities, e.g., grants
Attracting and holding quality superintendents
Different philosophies and expectations from sending schools
More participants can be time consuming and cumbersome

Question #2: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the school district model suggested by Commissioner Cate in his White Paper?

Advantages

Coordinated curriculum, K-12
Continuity of policies, calendars, etc.
Makes superintendent's job less complex
More consistent supervision of principals
Allows students to find similar peers through aggregation
Cost savings, i.e. economy of scale in purchasing & sharing of personnel
Uniform policies & contracts would translate to more focus on educational issues
Staff stability/flexibility – administration/staff
Theoretically, cost savings

Attract and hold on to inspired effective leadership
More qualified candidates
Simpler

Disadvantages

Loss of community identity & pride
Harder to disseminate and collect information/feedback from constituents
How to handle existing debt, building commitments, etc.
One person representing town is inadequate to represent diverse views. Need to weight by number of board members
Superintendent hiring principals will no longer allow vetoing by board representing the school community.
Too large a task for proposed size
Too narrow representation and limited access by the community
Limits those who would serve
This model can be seen as an effort by the commissioner and superintendents to consolidate the power.
Interested board members will get laid off
Tougher job for new board; ex. disciplinary appeals
Somebody will see taxes go up more
Salary negotiation complications

Debrief Comments:

Explain how you see this resulting in improved learning for kids.
What happens with tech centers? What would change?
Complex – don't rush into it.
Should have had elected officials here. Where were they?
Legislature scuttlebutt – what now?
Number of supervisory board needs to be bigger to keep diversity of ideas
See commonality of opinions
Suggestion: have a high school board and elementary board for all of the schools in the new district.
May result in more meetings (amount of work is still huge)
One board would have many schools – who would want to do it? We have unfilled spots already
Does this mean closing schools?
What about assistant superintendents? Would we need more?
Some of this is going on already
Enrollments going down – something has to change
Need oversight and accountability
Can build community in a different way other than “town” control
Board member responsibility – share w/superintendent; need training
Don't give superintendents too much power – can't have CEO w/too much power – business model is bad
Administrative costs a problem – can the plan fix this?
Special Ed costs/aides are being/should be shared
Unfunded mandates used as an excuse
Saving money but offering more opportunities are in opposition with each other
What problems are we trying to solve?
Unfunded mandates are true cost drivers